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Chapter Six: Angelique IV

(/en/story/127504/chapter/chapter-five-zara-and-david-ii-574513/)

May, 2028

Luxembourg was a small country. Nearly two thousand and five hundred square kilometres surrounded by important nations, before the war it's population barely even reached six or seven hundred thousand people. This didn't make it less

relevant, at all. In fact, this tiny duchy, still ruled by a constitutional monarchy, had one of the strongest European economies. Small, a highly valuable currency… but it's army was not exactly one to be afraid of. Luxembourg did not withstand the second wave of attacks carried out by Amere, becoming the first country in the old continent to fall. According to some old voices I once heard, they had enough resources to build emergency shelters and even small bunkers all around the woods in the north which was full of plateaus and mountains; they were useless. Aid for this miniscule state did not arrive in time and the capital fell in mere weeks. Later on the territory would become an intelligence base for Amere and… well… I found out about that through other means.

By the time Angelique and I crossed the non-existent borders, everything, or well, almost everything, was calm there. France no longer existed. Like most European nations, it remained as wild territory and almost all of its inhabitants had been evacuated years ago. Luxembourg suffered

a similar fate, but such a small country wasn't even a hot zone like France, where bandits, survivors, military and Amere were still fighting. Luxembourg… looked a lot more like a ghost town.

Back to our situation. We had crossed from Belgium to Luxembourg not too long ago, and that alone was reason enough to feel just slightly safer. This was because, since the nations fell, it was uncommon to find activity in areas far from the cities. That also applied to the south of Belgium. And I say specifically that it was solely the south, because the north of the country was still controlled by the government. I won't lie: I don't know much about this. We didn't spend much time in Belgian territory. But we did use their routes to easily enter the small neighbouring country.

Oesling, that is –was- the name for the northern part of Luxembourg. A lot of mountains and hills, not an easy place to travel on foot, which is precisely why I decided it was our best possible path; less chances of encountering hostiles. Plus, I

had some good info on my hands about some certain fortifications that had been built, and I was curious if we'd find anything of worth. Now that I read that last sentence I realize that the reader might think something along the lines of "This man just hiked across a devastated country with complicated geography, just out of curiosity?". The answer is: no. We had to cross some of the states in the east of France one way or another, but if given the choice… come on. Time wasn't really a problem and nowhere was truly safe, it was just a slight detour for a few weeks.

Oesling's irregular forests are beautiful. A true natural wonder that I had the pleasure to appreciate despite the dark times we were living through. One could not simply calmly walk through those green masses, even though the local fauna in those forests was mainly comprised of small animals, nature's takeover of civilization could attract more dangerous creatures.

"Isn't it too hard?"

"No"

"I could try softening it if you'd like"

"That's not necessary"

"Alright…"

A wild cat.

It was close to midday, Angelique and I were enjoying a wild cat as our meal. The ones at fault were my reflexes and my fear of running into a beast which I wouldn't be able to deal with. That's when I woke up lying against one of those trees and saw something observing me from a branch on another tree not too far away from me, my senses, slowed from just waking up, made me grab my pistol and shoot instantly. It was incredible. In a fraction of a second I took my 92, pointed at the head of that mysterious entity with one hand and fired. The flashiest and most out-of-a-movie shot I've ever done and it was just to kill a curious little cat that wasn't even trying to stalk us. I wasn't going to let that meat go to waste so I took the opportunity to eat an animal I'd never tasted before.

"It's got a ton of fiber. I would rather have kept eating preserved food"

"…"

"But I used a bullet on that animal. Not using those nutrients would've made it feel like a waste"

"…"

"It's not like it tastes bad anyway"

"…"

It was like talking to a wall. We'd known each other for almost a year, but my silent partner was hesitant to ever answer my words. How to define her? Maybe a small and loyal robot at my disposal. Sometimes… sometimes she terrified me. I'm not talking about her per se but rather, our relationship. If I told her to point her gun at someone and fire she never asked why. If I told her to take someone's belongings while I cut them down she did not refuse. It was perfect obedience.

"Since we're in a forest we should try to find a tree with fruits. It's been years since I tri-"

"Yesterday I saw… an apple tree"

I got a reply. Another note for my book.

Of course, I started rambling again without describing our situation. We were already in Luxembourg and it was our fourth day hiking through the forests in the country's "Cold Zone". Which in that time of the year –mid spring- wasn't exactly too cold. Trees then bushes then more trees. There was nothing of interest in sight yet. Though every now and then we'd see a cabin with nothing of value inside which we'd use to bathe and sleep, but far from those precious little towns surrounded by green that I'd seen in postcards and photos.

The calm weather made camping easier. Without having to worry too much about the cold we just had to look for a clearing where we could lie down comfortably or some thick tree trunk we could sit up against to cover ourselves with the same blanket. We looked more like adventurers than survivors.

"Great, that means we'll probably find

another one later on"

We made a fire in the centre of the small clearing where we'd stopped to cook and eat, there I threw the poor cat's bones to turn off the fire. I'd like to clarify that prior to this whole odyssey of mine I had never skinned an animal before, but the circumstances I was in made me learn it the hard way. Not without first getting my fair share of bad experiences.

Once we packed up –intelligently and avoiding unnecessary weight so that my backpack, which was tied with a knot at the front, wouldn't become an annoyance- and we were rested up, we resumed our journey. Once again walking, crushing sticks and avoiding the sun. Birds everywhere, the sounds of insects, the light breeze and the sound of leaves brushing against each other. Traversing nature had always been more enjoyable than exploring ruins.

Unfortunately, the long-awaited tree never showed up and I had to conform myself with a piece of meat covered in

vinegar as a snack. I hate them, I hate preserved food. They all taste the same and, even though the process is useful to keep it in an edible state for a long while, the smell is horrible. Though it may sound odd, Angelique seems to like them quite a bit. I've never asked her because I fear she might ask me to make more. I'm not the best partner, that's for sure.

So what happened was that, as we walked and I swallowed with disgust, washing my mouth with some water, Angelique walked a few steps ahead. She must've been quite surprised by whatever she saw, seeing as she suddenly stopped and by consequence I bumped into her from behind, spilling some water on her hair. No; she didn't even react.

"Angel?"

"…"

I put the cap back on the bottle and stored it in my backpack, completely silent as I grabbed my rifle. Back then I still used my ACE as a primary weapon, whereas Angel just used the Steyr M9 that she's

kept until now. I leaned slightly forward; positioning my head just beside my partner's to get her same field of vision and then I understood the situation without her needing to speak.

At around a hundred metres ahead, barely visible between the trees, on top of a small hill that was remarkable even for the plateau that we found ourselves in, was a robust-looking fortification. I'm not sure if it really qualified as a bunker, but it was more than clear that my bullets wouldn't be able to penetrate its rocky walls. It was rectangular, measuring maybe 20 metres on the front and who knows how many long. It didn't have any real windows to the sides of its metallic double door, but there were some slits, around a metre tall, evidently they'd been used to defend the place from within. Its surface was completely covered by bullet impacts, some of the rocks on the wall were even broken. Someone fought here.

"I get it… Do you hear anything?"

"No."

"We'll wait a while in silence. If you still don't hear anything then we'll enter."

I said "in silence" and she carried the order out immediately, her only response was a nod. We sat down almost at the same time next to two different trees and stared at the fortification above.

Check my mags, my rifle, think up an ideal route, giving the order of direct elimination. I had enough time to do that during the hour in which we waited silently. It even gave me the time to quietly appreciate Angelique's silhouette carefully observing our objective.

Almost a year had gone by since I'd found her. Her hair was no longer as short as before and the ends almost got to her shoulders, but her face and figure had barely, if at all, changed. If there was something that had noticeably changed then it was definitely her performance in battle; she's a great student. Ever since that time in the flowers her attitude made a slight and sudden turn. Killing quickly became necessary for her, she understood

taking a life as a way of surviving and she did not have a problem with executing someone from behind if that someone had the potential to endanger her survival.

Or at least that's the reason I thought she had.

"Nothing?"

I broke the silence, getting back on my feet.

"No, nothing."

"We'll go in then. Don't lower your guard anyways. It wouldn't be strange if someone was using such a secure fortress as a hideout."

"In case we find someone…"

"Direct elimination."

I only received an "Understood" as an answer before we got back on track. Obviously, even though the situation seemed favourable, lowering our guard was completely forbidden. Sliding in between the tree trunks, we did not use the environment's sounds to camouflage our footsteps; we walked faster the more

noticeable the wind was.

The slits on the bunker were too thin to see the inside clearly meaning we didn't have much visual information. I've always been proud of my good sight, so I suffer considerably when I'm not able to make the most out of it. I had Angelique as my ears, who in from one moment to the next, opened her sparkling eyes in surprise and stopped, once again, in her place. I turned my eyes to her and heard her speak.

"Alez, I heard a-"

The following burst of gunfire spoke in her place.

Small bushes, pieces of wood and dirt began being kicked up right in front of us as the automatic fire of a few rifles could be heard.

Surprised and without having been able to find, in that fraction of a second in which I looked back at the bunker, our aggressors, I forcefully took Angelique by her arm and began enacting a lateral retreat.

"From inside! They're inside!"

She screamed and I ran, avoiding the fort, hearing the sound of trees being penetrated get quieter and quieter. I didn't think about it clearly in that moment, but the fact that they hadn't shot at us as we ran meant they were firing without aiming. Suppressive fire? Or were they just trying to scare us away? Well…

"Run to the door!"

I let go of her arm to look back at the long hole on the wall, still, without noticing anything in my field of view, I raised my rifle. Angel followed my order without question.

I only managed to see two barrels peeking out and firing lead alternating at the place where Angelique and I had been before. How dumb could they be? Who would waste so much ammunition in a situation like this? You don't even need military training to understand that saving munitions is vital for continued engagements, even more so when you lack a sustained supply.

Taking a few seconds to carefully aim, I opened fire at the barrels in short, controlled bursts trying to harm or at least suppress the hostiles. Maybe I was even trying to just scare them to make them understand they'd entered a dangerous combat. Whatever my intentions may have been, one or some of my shots luckily managed to hit one of the barrels. They must have been firing the weapon at the time as I managed to hear a deflagration before a small explosion, and then a high pitched scream from inside.

My assumption: the barrel and/or the receiver exploded due to a faulty gas ejection, maybe disarming the shooter's hand, or even worse: causing damage to their face and chest. I also imagined that, due to the tone of the voice I heard, the shooter was a woman.

Measure my brutality? Try not to hit critical shots? No… That kind of mercy doesn't exist out there. I've seen men with no legs shoot others in the back who had previously offered their help only to steal

their food. In this painful world of today, being merciful will only mean your death.

Maybe it's that, or maybe it's just me who's seen so much and lived even more, that refuses to end up devoured by dogs simply because of trust.

"Alez! It's not locked!"

I ran to my partner, with about 5 metres separating us, and after moving her to the side and repositioning my rifle, I gave a strong kick with the sole of my foot to the metallic door. It didn't make much noise due to how robust it was and both Angel and me were the ones that filled that loud emptiness, quickly entering the building, ready to shoot down any objective present.

"Clear."

I called out in a short and dry way before quickly closing the door behind me.

The interior was predictable. As soon as we made our entry we ran into a wide concrete staircase that went down for only seven or eight steps to a lower platform that was part of the primary section of the bunker. There, was a cramped hallway with

a high ceiling which went through the entire fort.

Everything in this place was a muted grey, with rough but well illuminated surfaces thanks to the white lamps hanging from the ceiling.

"Angelique."

"I don't hear anything."

The shots had ceased. It was obvious they'd heard us come in and were preparing for close quarters combat. I began descending through the staircase with my back stuck to the wall, my rifle ready and its muzzle pointing at the hallway as the angle allowed me to observe it from a safer position. Once I reached the limit where I could go down without exposing my back, I lowered the front of my ACE and signalled Angelique to do the same.

"Clear."

She had a beautiful voice when she was younger.

Once both parts were clear I dared to

step on the lower floor to get a better look.

There were about 10 metres worth of hallways to each side. Lights on the walls, a very tall ceiling and several doors to both sides. At the end of each hallway was also another staircase that went up to the side opposite to where we'd come from.

"Voices. There are also some hurried footsteps."

"Are they all coming from the same direction?"

"Yes. The right. The corner they shot at us from before."

I'm not sure, dear reader, if my inexperienced way of narrating is capable of transmitting what I felt then. I'd found myself in hundreds of similar situations, and this one was not even close to the most dangerous, but the tension that is produced when you feel that at any moment someone could break through a door and kill us in an instant never disappears.

Without any orders, Angelique looked at me, while I thought what plan of action

we should take. I turned to the noises and burnt the layout of the hallway into my retina: the door closest on the wall on my right, the next to the left and the last one on the far right. Predictably, the last door would serve as the entrance to the room where the hostiles were to be found.

I advanced carefully, trying not to give away my footsteps and placed my hand on the steel door's handle.

"If something moves inside, shoot it."

A redundant order. I breathed in and pushed the door in as fast as I could, sweeping my field of vision with the rifle in search of an enemy although, maybe luckily, there was none.

"Entry!"

My partner entered the room and, repeating the same process as before, I closed it behind me. With a quick look I found the lock on the door and used it to provide us with some minimal security for a few minutes.

"Alez."

I turned and saw Angel doing the same with another steel door. A door I'd failed to see before.

"Angelique, that door leads to…"

"The noises come from the other side."

"Then...!"

"They know we're here."

I stopped to think for a second, taking the opportunity to explore the room with my eyes. It looked more like an administrative warehouse but with the size of an individual living room. A few wooden desks in one corner, the next corner –the one closest to me on my right- was filled with bookshelves in a complete mess filled to the brim with documents and folders, the one opposite to it had a small table screwed to the wall with some dishes and dirty utensils, as well as two chairs, and in the last corner was the door that lead to the unknown hostiles.

As should be done, I quickly searched everything in sight.

"I want you to stay as alert as possible

and tell me any relevant information you hear on the other side."

"They seem to be thinking of building up their defences."

With the characteristic violence of someone who scours a place without worrying about how the objects inside end up, I began to practically demolish the bookshelves in search of anything that could be of use to us. Every time I took an archive and threw it to the side the entire shelf shook strongly and the pages written on in various languages fell. No, I did not stop to read what they were about. It wasn't important just as it isn't now. Yes, there was a chance to find some type of secret shelter or something of the sort but honestly it was too improbable for me to consider it.

"Someone's crying. They… they're saying he lost a hand. And that person said that one way or another he'll use a weapon."

"Wait…"

"Hm?"

"No, it doesn't matter. Go on."

Angelique only spoke French. The fact that, miraculously the hostiles, probably inhabitants of old Luxembourg, were speaking French was strange to me. I mean, as far as I remember it was one of the country's official languages but I'm not sure it was used much. I decided to leave that for later.

"Can you tell how many of them there are?"

"No. They're all talking at the same time and there's a bunch of them."

"Chaotic."

"It even looks like they don't care much about the fact that only a wall separates us."

"They're probably just civilians or bandits. It won't take long."

During the conversation I scoured the interior of the drawers in the desks. Broken radios, batteries, a few bullets, spent casings, paper, more paper, pens,

coloured pencils, geometry instruments, maps, map charts. Nothing too interesting really, with the exception of a military topographic map which I thought might be useful to traverse the country. That was the only thing I stored in the interior of my coat.

"One of them is lost."

"Lost?"

"They're saying one of them isn't close. They don't know where he is and are discussing whether they should go get him or not."

"We'll take the lead."

"Alez?"

Angelique's eyebrows rose in surprise when she saw me carelessly throwing the empty drawer to the side and making my way to the door from which we'd come from initially.

"They're too indecisive; they won't take the initiative to come out. It's our chance to eliminate one of them while he's alone. Clearly we're at a numerical disadvantage,

so equalizing their numbers will be the best plan we can take."

"…"

She simply nodded and ran after me.

I carefully pulled the door handle, spying each side to check that there was no one in the halls and stepped outside. I stepped outside…

The instant I put one foot outside the door, the door on my right that connected the hall to the enemy, suddenly opened. To put it in an understandable way, it was like going from a state of tension level 1 to 10 in a fraction of a second.

It was instantaneous. Without needing to identify objectives I simply raised my ACE and fired. Something moved, something screamed, something fell. Something tried to close the door but the something from before was in the way and stopped it. Angelique was precise in peeking out and firing as well. The enemy didn't even have the chance to respond in the first place. The sparks, smoke and confusion produced by the noise didn't let

me notice what was happening.

Something else fell to the floor and, although the door stayed open, nothing else came through. My ears were assaulted by a horrendous ringing. A concentrated firefight in a closed room can leave anyone without protection deaf.

After a few moments without any movement I lowered my gun and signalled Angelique to cover me. The smoke began to dissipate and the ringing slowly disappeared. Then… then…

"The hall is clear, but there are still people inside, Alez!"

"…"

"Alez?"

They were young.

The bodies full of holes of two kids Angel's age lied down on the floor over a growing pool of blood that spread both in and outside the hallway.

The time it took for me to see the scene was not more than 2 seconds but it was enough to understand, partially, what was

happening.

The inaccurate shots in the forest, the fact that they didn't follow us when we escaped, the unlocked doors, the minimal coordination, the indecisiveness, their non-existent spatial awareness… it all made sense once I found out the age of those "enemies".

The dishes, the colour pencils. The amount of unburnt classified documents, the unused maps. The high pitched scream. It didn't belong to a woman, but rather a kid whose hand had been destroyed. That same kid, with red hair just like David's, was lying there. He was the first to fall, in other words, the one who opened the door. His left hand was covered by a plastic bag, and in his right hand was a Glock 17.

The other one fell a second later, almost sitting, with his torso against the wall, and his brown coat's hood covering his long black hair. In front of him was an AUG in a terrible state which fell out of his hands once enough bullets had stopped his motor

functions.

Both weapons were part of the standard issue for the Luxembourg armed forces, meaning those kids had found it in that very same bunker. Probably reserves that were left behind when the army was defeated.

How did those kids get there? Such an inaccessible place, certainly dangerous and far from any towns or cities. Did they go there in search of weapons? Probably not. They would have to had known they were there. I didn't know then, and I'm still not sure now, because…

"Someone's running towards us from that room!"

Angelique's words brought me back to reality. I located the only door on the opposite side of the hallway, I kicked it open after ordering her to stay put. It was a bedroom but I didn't bother much with the details. I heard a couple shots coming from my partner's pistol and reloaded my Galil's empty mag before peeking out again to suppress the same objective as

before.

I heard a scream and someone falling. Only I advanced. Watching the corners through my iron sights and breathing heavily.

Once I was next to the doorway to that hot room from where we'd been shot at I put my back against the wall, my backpack, which wasn't too packed, didn't bother me that much. There I felt the heat emanating from the 3 corpses on the floor but I forced myself to ignore it.

Then I turned. Knowing that my enemies were far below me in technique, reactions and professionalism, I aggressively made entry and fired. They were 3 young kids, two carrying handguns without any sort of protection. Before the first one could manage to line up his eyes with his sights, three 7.62x51 bullets impacted his left shoulder and neck, falling him instantly. The second, a pretty tall kid, managed to fire once but he hadn't even put both hands on his weapon yet; a single shot went through his right

cheek, killing him instantly. The third ran towards the door Angelique had previously locked –the one that lead to the administrative warehouse- and made a futile attempt to open it. I wouldn't have shot him if it wasn't for the fact that, when he saw me kill his two friends, he jumped on the body of the taller one to try and grab his Glock; I was forced to pierce his back and neck with 2 shots.

And that was it. The entire room smelled like death and only I stood within, inexpressively looking at the faces of those objectives that never had a chance against me. It looked extremely excessive, but… but… What would you have done in my place?! It's not that easy to think rationally and morally when the most miniscule doubt means that you or your companion end up with your brains splattered all over the floor! I feel no remorse! I know that you, if perhaps the world is back to stability, are reading this in a comfortable place in your home, you're thinking of me as a cold blooded assassin who doesn't care about committing an atrocity! But I don't

care! I ended those children's lives because it meant securing both Angelique's and my safety AND I WOULD DO IT AGAIN IF IT WAS NECESSARY, WITH THE SAME OR EVEN MORE FORCE! You don't live my life! You don't understand how it feels to be unable to trust anyone! Mercy can lead you to ruin if-

…

I decided to take a break before continuing this story, but here I am again. Where was I?

"It's clear."

Once I said that Angel moved the corpses at the entrance to follow me inside. It was a simple room. A few staircases that went up for about a metre so that the shooter could position himself near the slit in the wall from which they could open fire. Some ammo boxes and medical supplies next to the walls, but nothing of note. Of course, there was also a destroyed AUG on the floor.

"Empty the Glock mags and put the

bullets in your backpack. I'll… I'll go check the bedroom I saw before."

"Understood."

I slowly went back .

The bedroom was… a bit more complete than the rest of the rooms. It was pretty wide and spacious. There were 10 or so beds with grey blankets, almost all of them were a mess and, I must say, for a dorm full of kids it was surprisingly well organized. Drawers to the sides, a desk with some drawings on it, the hanging lamps turned off and in one corner a barrel that seemed to have some clothes and a few backpacks.

"They've been here for quite a while."

I approached the barrel and checked inside. Coats, a few hats, an umbrella, another backpack and… a small bag that caught my eye as it had something inside. Letting the rifle hang by its sling I took the bag with both hands and positioned it so that the light from the hallway allowed me to see what I was looking at.

Within, a small blue container had some

chalk and a flyer. I focused on the paper and suddenly that strange situation I found myself in made some sense.

"'Arlon Orphanage'. That's Belgium. It's not… not too far from here but, how long has it been since the south of Belgium fell? Maybe four years? Or three? These kids can't have been here that long… no, maybe the region they were in fell later and… and then they had to flee, finding this place by pure coincidence."

As I deciphered piece by piece the mystery of having a military full of kids who didn't reach past twelve or thirteen years, the shadow of someone standing in the hall caught my attention and distracted me from reading the rest of the flyer. I didn't raise my head, seeing as I was making sure there wasn't anything else inside the bag.

"Did you finish checking the mags from all the handguns? We're going to take one of them as insurance. Those kinds of guns are very reliable and it wouldn't be bad to have one in an emergency. Choose the one

that looks best and-"

Click.

The single release of a firing pin that wasn't hitting a cartridge. I looked up, as surprised as I was alerted and I froze up.

He was slightly shorter than the rest, he must've been around ten years old and his height gave him away. I don't remember much about his physique due both to how many years it's been and due to the tension I felt in that moment which only let me see the gun in his hands.

The muzzle was pointed at my head, it was shaking a lot and it shook even more whenever he tried to pull the trigger but… but nothing happened.

"W-w-w-why won't it…?!"

He spoke French.

I didn't even take my rifle. There was a mag in the Glock but evidently it was either empty or the bullet had not entered the chamber. He angrily pressed on the trigger, hating the tool in his hands and wondering why he couldn't kill me right

then and there. Truthfully he had no idea. I let out a silent sigh, realizing that I'd made a fatal error by lowering my guard like that, the enemy in front of me was completely inoffensive.

"Lower your gun, I'm not going to shoot you"

I tried to sound convincing, but it only made him angrier, and caused him to continue, pointlessly, trying to shoot me.

I thought of the easiest way to jump on him, take his gun and leaving him unconscious for a while so that Angel and I could leave, but before I could even approach, a real shot replaced the previous clicking.

I jumped back and opened my eyes from the shock.

The boy in front of me fell. His head hit the floor and the gun in his hands bounced over to my feet. He didn't die instantly as his arms still moved desperately trying to cover a hole maybe near his neck.

I stepped forward and Angelique's silhouette came into view.

I was afraid.

Looking at the expression on her face you could've thought Angel was furious, scared, sad, happy, excited or… or dead. It was a completely blank expression.

"Ange… Angelique wai-"

I couldn't finish the sentence. She raised her Steyr and executed him with a shot to the head, the boy stopped moving.

"An…"

"That must've been the one that got lost. We forgot about him because of the fight"

It's true, we had heard one of them got lost. But that didn't matter to me at the time.

I threw the bag to the side and without thinking I jumped on Angelique.

"Al-?"

I grabbed her by her shoulders and pushed her against the wall.

"Why did you shoot him?!"

"I-I don-"

"You heard the noise his gun made! You knew it wasn't loaded! He couldn't kill me!"

"B-but Alez you-"

Her eyes looked confused, I can't blame her. That was the first time I screamed at her like that and… and honestly I wish it had been the last time.

Yeah... I don't like being this way.

I can't help it sometimes, I can't even avoid it, or control myself. I don't even know when it started.

Sometimes, I suffer from short yet intense fits of rage, and I always regret yelling at her afterwards.

I'm just a crazy old man in the end.

"Knocking him out was more than enough! What use was killing him like that?!"

I must've looked like such a hypocrite.

"Why?!"

"That was because…"

I don't think I'm a bad person, but I'm not good either. I just try to survive, meaning that while I can mercilessly kill someone who puts my safety in danger, I'm not interested in causing pain if it's not to that same end.

"He was Alez's enemy."

"What…?"

"All of Alez's enemies are my enemies too, right?"

"B-but this… this kid wasn't a threat, then-"

"It doesn't matter. I've always received order after order to kill the enemies that attack you. It doesn't really matter how dangerous they are."

"Even… Even if they're disarmed?"

Had I really given her orders like that? To be honest… I don't remember.

"Even if they're disarmed. And, even if I hadn't received those orders… I want to protect you like you protect me."

Nearly 2 minutes passed by in complete silence as we stared into each other's eyes.

Then I let go of her shoulders and turned to grab the Glock on the floor.

It was all my fault. A little girl, fourteen years old at most, taking lives indiscriminately and with no remorse, in an absurdly inhuman way… for me. She was my tool. It was then that I understood I had turned that girl into a tool to help me survive, and she didn't care in the slightest. The creation of an innocent monster.

How horrible, how disastrous, how immoral.

Who could I ask for forgiveness for something like that? God? I stopped believing a few years back and seeing the entire continent in ruins wasn't too inspiring to say the least.

Yes, I was no longer a believer, but as I picked the gun up from the floor and put it in my backpack I could only think of one thing:

'God, if you're up there. Let all the sins Angelique commits be my burden'

…

We abandoned the bunker and continued our path to the south east. There wasn't much light left and there were no towns in sight, so with the help of the topographic map I found earlier I found the best clearing to rest comfortably. We'd left the bunker only half an hour earlier.

I was exhausted and could only think of lying down to sleep, but when we got to the clearing, surrounded by green pastures and fruit trees we ran into an unexpected scene.

A boy, maybe thirteen years old getting down from a branch with two apples and a younger girl waiting below. They had old clothes, almost tattered. Neither looked in our direction.

"Alez those are…"

The kids heard Angelique's voice and turned to see us, horrified when they saw the rifle hanging on my chest.

"L-Lucas!"

The pale skinned girl with short blonde hair screamed and hid behind the bigger boy, who had a slightly darker skin and brown hair. Like an animal defending its cubs, the boy stared at me with ferocity. Disarmed, but it was clear he was ready to kill me with his nails and teeth if necessary.

Angelique pointed her gun at him. It was clear the kid, named Lucas, wasn't going to be able to close the 10 or so metres that separated us before Angel fired.

I put one of my hands over hers and signalled her to lower her weapon, which she did without complaining.

"Leave."

It's all I could say. I didn't have the energy to deal with something like that again.

Still in an alerted state, Lucas looked around, searching for the best place to flee through, he took the girl by her arm and ran away with her through the trees.

"Alez, they… that direction… they're going to the place we came from."

"We'll keep going."

"Weren't we going to rest here?"

"I changed my mind. There's a less exposed clearing near here an hour from here."

"But..."

I didn't pay attention and kept walking. Sighing from the exhaustion.

"But there's apples here…"

I searched one of the pockets in my backpack looking for the Glock that kid was carrying. I had to clear my doubts about something.

"Well… there may be more up ahead…"

Angel was still talking to herself. Which, in case I haven't mentioned it before, was stranger than snow during summer. Maybe she was trying to cheer me up?

…

The crunch of sticks under our feet, the smell of nature, the light that slowly

turned orange, the sounds of insects…

The Glock wasn't even loaded.

May 22, 2022, 6:19 a.m. 3 comments

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S A **SHIKI AllCaps** @shiki_all_capitals (/en/u/shiki_all_capitals/)

Good chapter. I especially liked Alez' little outburst in the middle. It's a shame that having the story in a digital format limits what you can do with the pages, because It'd be cool if Alez' writing became increasingly distorted (like one sentence taking up a whole page or the letters becoming less legible) to further hammer in how much recalling these events affected him. I suppose if you ever decide to put BSA into real paper, that's something you could do lol

Reply Comment 7:47 (/en/dashboard/story/comment/719012/vote/up/)

Hazo @hazo (/en/u/hazo/)

> Honestly that's something I've thought about before and I really want to do sometime haha
>
> April 03, 2025, 20:01 ♡ (/en/dashboard/story/comment/719088/vote/up/)

August Forneart @channich (/en/u/channich/)

Such a great chapter, Hazo! Your best one so far! ^.^

"The creation of an innocent monster" I loved that.

And it's obvious you put a lot of research into it too.

Reply | comment | May 6, 2025, 05:44 ♡ (/en/dashboard/story/comment/367729/vote/up/)

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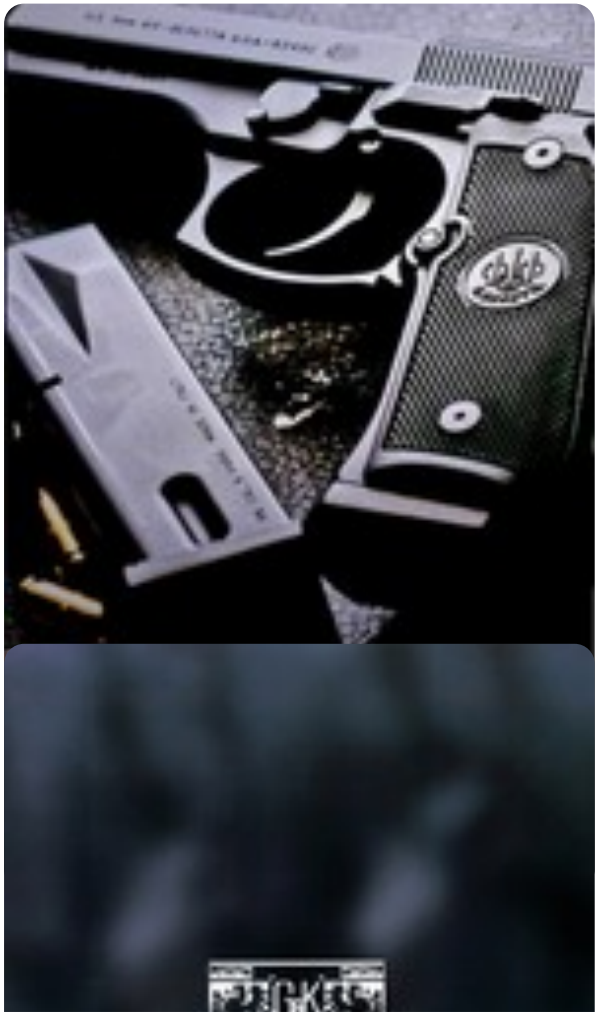

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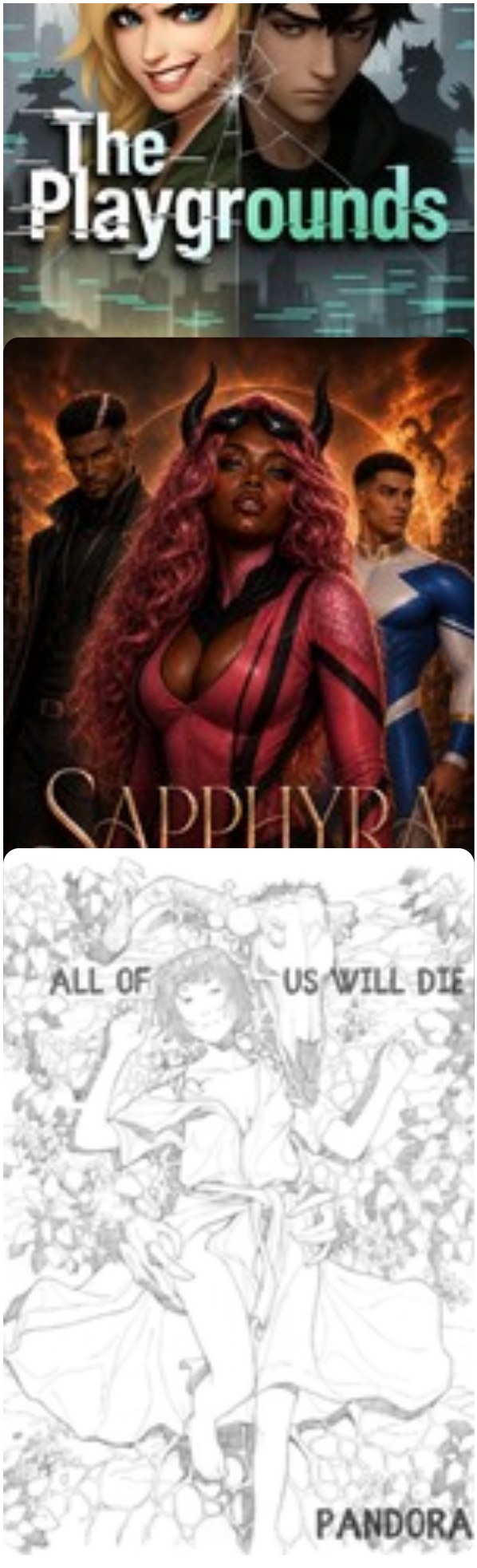

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